



Gatecrasher aims to be the best by design

Simon Raine looks back on the late 1990s with a certain fondness, but he is also happy to draw a line under that era. He wasn't on the dance floor dressed in cyberwear himself. Instead he was the MD of Gatecrasher, the club that became synonymous with trance and the term 'superclub'.

'We did that whole trance thing and we did it better than anyone else on the planet,' he says. 'But it would be a bit sad if we were still stuck doing that. Gatecrasher has definitely grown up.'

What Gatecrasher has grown into, in Raine's words, is 'a mondo-luxury hyper-club', the latest branch of which, following Nottingham and Leeds, launches in Birmingham this Saturday with a party headlined by Pete Tong. Other nights, such as the indie-centric Propaganda and R&B event Soundproof, show that Gatecrasher has moved away from its trance-heavy diet to cater for more diverse tastes. But the music is only part of the attraction.

Raine believes that clubbers these days want a variety of entertainment presented in the most technologically advanced way possible. To this end, Gatecrasher has spent £5million and hired famed American club designer Cal Fortis, the man behind the Crobar venues in New York and Miami, to transform The Works complex on Broad Street. The 2,500-capacity venue has been split into four rooms full of features such as an LED wall, giant mirrorball and top-of-the-range sound and lighting systems based on an aesthetic described as Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas meets Blade Runner.

'This is our flagship venue and we wanted to break the mould when it came to club design,' Raine states. 'We had a 325sq m space and the challenge was to break it up and make it more intimate, while keeping a sense of spectacle, theatre and drama. I think we've achieved it. This is a club you could see in New York, Ibiza or Miami.'

This all sounds much more glamorous than Birmingham's Broad Street, not that Raine seems too worried.

'Broad Street has changed a lot during the past ten years and the days of it being described as "the strip" are gone,' he says. 'But you can't compare it with anywhere else in Birmingham because we are world-class. This isn't the best club in the UK; it's probably one of the best clubs in the world.'

Sat Sep 20, Gatecrasher, 182 Broad Street, Birmingham. 9pm to 4am, £9. Tel: 0121 633 1250. www.gatecrasherbirmingham.com